

# ecoNews — Wire —

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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**For immediate release**

## **1. Volunteer sign-up begins for Project AWARE river cleanup**

### **VOLUNTEER SIGN-UP BEGINS FOR PROJECT AWARE RIVER CLEANUP**

DES MOINES — More than 100 volunteers pulled out tires, barrels, chairs and other junk items from the Maquoketa River last year as part of the first Project AWARE. With 2004 volunteer registration now open, organizers are hoping for similar results with this year's cleanup of the Des Moines River in June.

Project AWARE — which stands for A Watershed Awareness River Expedition — spends one week each summer cleaning up an Iowa river. Comprised of volunteers from around the state, the group travels by canoe, pulling out trash from the river as they go. Some participants take water samples throughout the trip, checking levels of nitrates, pH, dissolved oxygen and numbers of insects living in the river.

The event goes beyond just cleanup with educational presentations each night, which can range from botany and statistics to history, poetry and philosophy.

This year's event begins June 19 in Fort Dodge and wraps up June 26 in Des Moines. Participants may choose to volunteer one day, a few days or all week.

“What I find so endearing about Project AWARE is that we were able to bring together people of varied disciplines to apply their knowledge and muscle to address water quality,” said Tom O’Neill of the DNR’s Keepers of the Land volunteer program. “We hope that people will understand that their actions affect others both upstream and downstream and that once again, they might feel connected to nature, society and most importantly, to themselves.”

Camping during the project is free. Low-cost catered meals and a limited number of canoes are available.

The event is co-hosted by the IOWATER citizen water monitoring program and DNR Keepers of the Land.

Results of last year's project and more information are available at  
[www.iowadnr.com/volunteer/04aware.html](http://www.iowadnr.com/volunteer/04aware.html).

**To register or for more information, contact Tom O'Neill at (515) 281-4539.**